

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 EB-11 COME-00 LAB-06 SIL-01 TRSE-00

OMB-01 INT-08 FEA-02 DRC-01 /148 W

----- 038839

R 011907Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7643

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK, PINT

SUBJECT: TUC REFUSES COMMITMENT TO PAY BOARD REPORT

BUT AGREES TO FURTHER TALKS WITH HEATH

REF: LONDON 1463

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE TUC ECONOMIC COMMITTEE MET TODAY
(FEBRUARY 1) AND AGREED TO MEET THE PRIME MINISTER IN
RESPONSE TO HIS INVITATION TO FURTHER TALKS -- BUT
ON AN EXPLORATORY BASIS AND WITH NO COMMITMENT TO
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ACCEPT THE PAY BOARD REPORT ON RELATIVITIES (REFTEL).

A SPOKESMAN IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD US THAT HEATH HAS BEEN INFORMED OF THE TUC'S REPLY, AND THAT WHILE A MEETING WITH THE TUC, PERHAPS TOGETHER WITH THE CBI, IS "POSSIBLE" EARLY NEXT WEEK, NO DECISION HAS YET BEEN MADE. END SUMMARY

2. TUC GENERAL SECRETARY LEN MURRAY TOLD JOURNALISTS THAT THE TUC ECONOMIC COMMITTEE HAD EXPRESSED MANY DOUBTS ABOUT THE PAY BOARD REPORT ON RELATIVITIES BUT HAD WRITTEN THE PRIME MINISTER THAT IT "GIVES ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO THE WIDELY-HELD VIEW THAT THE MINERS SHOULD BE TREATED AS AN EXCEPTION IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES." THE COMMITTEE INFORMED MR. HEATH, HE ADDED, THAT THEY WERE ANXIOUS TO ACHIEVE AN ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT OF THE COAL DISPUTE WHICH WOULD MAKE POSSIBLE THE ENDING OF THE THREE-DAY WEEK.

3. DAVID BASNETT, A MODERATE MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, TOLD US THAT THE TUC HAD DECIDED, IN EFFECT, "TO POST-PONE CONSIDERATION OF THE RELATIVITIES REPORT BUT TO TELL THE PRIME MINISTER: 'FOR GOD'S SAKE, LET US SETTLE THE DISPUTE'". HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE HONESTLY COULD NOT SAY WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER REALLY WANTS A SETTLEMENT OR WHETHER HE WISHES TO GET IN THE LAST WORD IN THE PRE-CONFRONTATION PROPAGANDA WAR. R.W. BRIGINSHAW A LEFT-WING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, TOLD US THAT "WE SHALL BE GOING TO SEE THE PRIME MINISTER NOT ON TERMS SET OUT IN HIS LETTER BUT TO SEE IF HE IS WILLING TO GET OFF THE HOOK."

4. THE CBI'S GENERAL COUNCIL WILL HOLD AN EMERGENCY MEETING ON MONDAY TO PREPARE A REPLY TO MR. HEATH. THE NUM WILL HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE ON MONDAY MORNING TO ANNOUNCE THE RESULTS OF THE MINERS' BALLOT AND THE NUM EXECUTIVE WILL MEET ON TUESDAY MORNING TO DECIDE THE NEXT STEPS, IN THE LIGHT OF THE BALLOT RESULTS AND THE OUTCOME OF ANY MEETING BETWEEN HEATH AND THE TUC OR THE CBI.

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

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5. COMMENT: THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE TUC ECONOMIC COMMITTEE CAN HARDLY BE DESCRIBED AS AN ENTHUSIASTIC LEAP FORWARD TO ACCEPT THE PRIME MINISTER'S ELEVENTH HOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR A SOLUTION TO THE CURRENT IMPASSE. YET, SOME OBSERVERS HERE APPEAR TO BELIEVE THAT, NONE-THELESS, AN AIR OF COMPROMISE IS IN THE AIR. FOR EXAMPLE, PETER JENKINS WRITES IN THE "GUARDIAN" TODAY THAT "THE WORST INDUSTRIAL CRISIS TO GRIP THE COUNTRY

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SINCE PRE-WAR IS ON THE WAY TO BEING RESOLVED IN THE CONVENTIONAL POST-WAR BRITISH MANNER, THAT IS, IN

A GOOD OLD SOGGY COMPROMISE." JENKINS ARGUES THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S READING OF THE CURRENT SITUATION INDICATED THAT IT WAS IN FOR "A LONG SLUGGING MATCH (WITH THE MINERS) WITH NO END IN SIGHT (A) PROSPECT (WHICH) WAS TOO AWFUL TO CONTEMPLATE."

6. SINCE HIGH HOPES FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE CRISIS HAVE BEEN DASHED A NUMBER OF TIMES BEFORE, AND SINCE THE TUC ENTERS THE "COUNT-DOWN" PHASE WITH SOMETHING LESS THAN AN OLIVE BRANCH IN ITS HAND, IT WOULD BE HIGHLY IMPRUDENT TO PREDICT A SETTLEMENT. NEXT WEEK'S CRITICAL MEETINGS SHOULD TELL THE TALE.

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